

Kevin Diaz, *Hot Dish Blog* (Star Tribune)

Congress is expected to tighten its fiscal belt this year, but not at the expense of military logos on NASCAR race cars.

A budget-cutting proposal by Minnesota Democrat Betty McCollum to end military NASCAR sponsorships crashed and burned Friday on the final lap of a House amendment process. It was voted down 281-148.

McCollum called the tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer funding for NASCAR race cars an "absurdity."

Opponents called it a "politically charged" proposal that would undermine military recruiting. In a debate leading up to an unrecorded voice vote Thursday night, North Carolina Republican Patrick McHenry called NASCAR a "target rich environment" for military recruiters.

McCollum's amendment was one of hundreds the House dealt with in a marathon voting session as part of a bill funding government operations through the end of September.

McCollum Chief of Staff Bill Harper said the vote showed that "even a Tea Party Republican-led Congress is not serious about cutting wasteful spending."

Besides one highly-publicized death threat via fax, Harper said McCollum's office received calls from Tea Party supporters "all over the country" supporting McCollum and angry that Republicans had largely abandoned her on the vote.

"It is really interesting," he said.

Though McCollum got the support of some 30 Republicans, nearly 75 Democrats also voted against the amendment, proving that NASCAR and military recruiting aren't necessarily partisan issues in Congress.

Undeterred, McCollum said she will introduce new legislation to prohibit taxpayer funds from being used for motor sports sponsorships, including a \$45 million earmark for NASCAR and race track owners.